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Chairman: Mr. Kuchinsky ..... (Ukraine)
later: Ms. Kusorgbor (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Ghana)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

Agenda item 93: Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (*continued*) (A/59/120 and A/59/115)

Agenda item 94: Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family (*continued*) (A/59/73)

(a) Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family (*continued*) (A/59/176 and A/C.3/59/L.2)

(b) United Nations Literacy Decade: education for all (*continued*) (A/59/267)

Agenda item 95: Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing (*continued*) (A/59/164)

1. **The Chairman**, referring to the proposal to invite two further special rapporteurs and an independent expert to submit their reports to the Third Committee, said that it raised three problems: the budgetary implications of their participation, their physical availability, and the impact their statements would have on the Committee's programme of work. He suggested that discussion of the proposal and any decision on the matter should be deferred to the morning meeting on Monday, 11 October 2004.

2. *It was so decided.*

3. **Mr. Axelsson** (Sweden), representing his country's youth and speaking under agenda item 94, welcomed his Government's decision to allow Sweden's 100 youth organizations to elect a representative. It must be acknowledged that young men and women were a resource for development rather than a target group for aid. Their creativity, engagement and critical thinking made them a vital and unlimited resource for sustainable development and the Millennium Development Goals. But beyond that, the time had come to start looking at things in a new way and to act and think locally as well as globally.

4. He urged all nations to give the youth of the world a voice by sending a national youth representative to the United Nations General Assembly in 2005. That would mean that nations with more means must help the more disadvantaged nations so that all the regions of the world were duly represented. It also meant that non-governmental organizations should be involved in the election of those representatives. The year 2005 was particularly important since nations had undertaken in 1995 to implement the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond and the decision had been taken in 2003 to discuss and evaluate its implementation two years later. He therefore called upon all States to fulfil their commitments and to carry out that evaluation in all seriousness.

5. The youth of Sweden also called on all nations to implement — locally, nationally and globally — policies consistent with four basic facts: that the youth of the world were not a problematic group of children, but a tremendous resource for development; that they had been acting locally for centuries and by so doing had made a difference; that the time had come to allow them to take a more active part in shaping the future of the world, and that there could be no such thing as good governance without youth participation. In conclusion, he stressed that the question was not whether the youth of the world could and would act locally as well as globally, but whether the nations of the world were willing to tap into that enormous resource.

6. **Mr. Al-Zaabi** (United Arab Emirates), speaking under agenda item 94, said that the family was the most important unit of society and a factor in emotional, physical and social stability. The family should therefore be celebrated annually and not merely in a single international year. His Government's measures to promote the family included the promulgation in 2003 of a royal decree establishing the Higher Council for Childhood and Maternity, with the goal of protecting the welfare of mothers and children; accession to all the human rights conventions and treaties; promulgation of laws derived from the Sharia to protect the rights of individuals; the forthcoming promulgation of a personal-status law that would govern family relations. Other measures had been taken to encourage young people to start a family (financial assistance and low interest loans, and the Marriage Fund Facility founded in 1993). Laws had also been promulgated to protect the rights of working women.

7. Turning to the fight against illiteracy, he said that his delegation approved of the recommendations set forth in the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the International Plan of Action for the United Nations Literacy Decade (A/59/267) and called on the international community to redouble its efforts to eradicate the scourge of illiteracy. Royal directives based on the realization of the importance of the role of education in social development and as an investment in human beings had been adopted in order to improve educational systems in the country; the State was considering providing free education and making primary education compulsory. His Government was also endeavouring to improve the quality of education. Specifically, it had formulated a plan to eliminate illiteracy and had established 122 literacy centres. The illiteracy rate had dropped to 10 per cent and it was expected that full literacy would be attained in five years' time. He hoped that the deliberations of the Third Committee would help to discover ways of creating a society that included all human beings without distinction and that responded to the needs of the vulnerable.

8. **Ms. Ramiro Lopez** (Philippines), after associating herself with the statement made by Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, expressed support for the Secretary-General's recommendation that the Commission include the situation of older women in its agenda. The Philippine Congress had recently granted additional benefits and privileges to senior citizens by amending Act No. 7432, an act to maximize the contribution of senior citizens to nation-building. The Philippine delegation noted the Secretary-General's call in paragraph 58 (a) of his report (A/59/176) to establish three institutional pillars in integrating family issues into national development policies. In April 2004, the President had issued a presidential proclamation directing the National Committee on the Filipino Family to coordinate the observance of the International Year of the Family and the preparation of a 10-year plan for the Filipino family for 2005-2015.

9. The Philippines endeavoured to pursue policies consistent with the overarching social development objectives embodied in texts adopted by Member States in an effort to attain a "society for all" based on respect for individual dignity and human rights. Over the period 2001-2004, her Government had focused mainly on the disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. The programmes put in place aimed at improving access to quality education, health, nutrition and reproductive health care. Social services expenditure over the previous three years had averaged one quarter of the country's total expenditures, with the bulk devoted to education, culture and manpower development. Although significant achievements had been accomplished, challenges persisted and called for priority action in many areas.

10. First, developing countries needed to address weaknesses in their macroeconomic environments and fiscal situations through more aggressive revenue mobilization and efficient management of expenditures. Second, it was necessary to pursue growth geared to the poor, which would enable them to play a dynamic part in economic activities and benefit from them, by abolishing spatial disparities, particularly the gap between urban and rural communities. Third, improvement of employment policies had to go hand in hand with reforms to stabilize the macroeconomy and accelerate long-term growth. Fourth, there was a need for a complete and credible system at all levels to make for more appropriate interventions specific to the needs of the most vulnerable. There was also a need to improve the quality of basic education in an attempt to boost academic performance, especially in rural communities, develop a new system of outcome assessment and adopt innovative approaches. Fifth, a credible and complete database for monitoring and formulating policy actions was needed.

11. The challenges to be faced might differ from country to country, but all countries must adopt the same bold approach and must be strong in the conviction that among the many important missions and responsibilities of government, the duty to ensure that everyone lived a secure, prosperous and productive life remained the supreme goal.

12. **Ms. Dib** (Austria), speaking on behalf of Austrian youth under agenda item 94, said that democracy was celebrated as a great success of the twentieth century, in which context it was regrettable that the turnout at elections was so low, at least in Europe and especially among young people. It was not that youth were uninterested in politics; rather, they were ill-prepared and poorly informed, in addition to which they wished to feel that they were treated as full and equal partners. The participation of young people

in democracy should be supported in school, at home and by politicians.

13. Nearly every political issue could be linked to youth politics. On the question of racism and prejudices, for example, projects for children and young people could be initiated in schools. Austria already had such a project, called "School without racism", which also supported youth camps where young refugees met young people from Austria.

14. Turning to the question of gender equality, she referred to the Millennium Development Goal of eliminating gender disparity in all levels of education by no later than 2015. Although that was one of the most important of the Goals, it did not go far enough. Legal equality did not automatically lead to real equality between girls and boys or between women and men; therefore, education must teach gender equality. Moreover, illiteracy affected mostly women and girls and the majority of people living in poverty were women.

15. With reference to the Millennium Declaration and the document "A World Fit for Children" adopted by the General Assembly at its twenty-seventh special session, she reminded all Governments that their goal was to create a better world for young people, who wanted to be part of the discussions and decisions that would shape the world in which they would live. Welcoming the participation of youth representatives in the discussions of the Third Committee as an important sign, she called on all Member States to ensure the increased participation of young people from all regions of the world, including developing countries, in the Committee's activities, as their greater open-mindedness would enrich the work of every national delegation and of the United Nations as a whole.

16. **Ms. Otiti** (Uganda), after associating her delegation with the statement made by Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that her Government had established and strengthened its Department for the Disabled and Elderly. It had also established a national task force on ageing and its future plans included the establishment of a national equal opportunities commission with an older persons' desk that would be responsible for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of areas of concern to older people.

17. Although Uganda provided a good example of best practices to be followed in combating HIV/AIDS, only modest achievements had been registered. Many unanticipated challenges remained to be overcome. In that connection, her Government had adopted various policies, such as a National Overarching Policy on HIV/AIDS, a National Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children policy, a national condom policy and strategy, a national policy on HIV/AIDS and the world of work, a voluntary counselling and testing policy and a national antiretroviral policy. The National Strategic Framework for the period 2000-2006 had been revised and its main objectives were now to reduce HIV prevalence by 25 per cent, strengthen the national capacity to coordinate the response to the pandemic, mitigate the psychosocial and economic effects of HIV/AIDS, improve the quality of life of people living with HIV/AIDS and mitigate the impact of HIV/AIDS on development in Uganda. Crucial to that effort were such initiatives as the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, the World Bank Multi-Country HIV/AIDS Programme for Africa, the Great Lakes Initiative on AIDS and the United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. For Uganda, the way forward was to ensure that efforts were better coordinated and targeted to the population in need, with emphasis on food security, nutritional support and rights of vulnerable groups.

18. The absence of a definition for literacy was regrettable. She agreed with the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) that literacy and poverty eradication were closely linked. It was therefore essential to adopt a multidimensional approach to poverty eradication. As a result of the Universal Primary Education initiative, the number of children enrolled in Ugandan primary schools had risen from 2.5 million in 1986 to 7.5 million currently and attention was now being focused on secondary education. The ideals of the Poverty Eradication Action Plan had been mainstreamed and would be operationalized by the Social Development Sector Strategies Investment Plan. In conclusion, she stressed the vital need to enhance the capacity of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) in order to address the challenges of development, governance and security facing Africa.

19. **Mr. Bhusal** (Nepal), after aligning himself with the statement made by the representative of Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the adoption of the Copenhagen Declaration and

Programme of Action had put people at the heart of the development process.

20. Developing countries, in particular the least developed countries (LDCs), were mired in poverty, hunger and disease, a situation further complicated by the eruption of conflicts in Asia and Africa. Although national governments had the primary responsibility for social development, social integration would not be achieved without commitment and joint action on the part of the international community.

21. Realization of the internationally agreed development targets, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, demanded a new partnership between the developed and developing countries with a view to sound policies, enhanced financial resources, increased foreign direct investment, fair and transparent international trade, fulfilment of the targets for official development assistance, debt relief measures and coherence in international monetary, financial and trading systems.

22. The international community should fulfil the pledges made at the World Summit for Social Development. The developed countries should also make good on their promise to provide 0.7 per cent of their national income for socio-economic development in the poor countries and between 0.15 and 0.20 per cent of their gross domestic product as official development assistance for the least developed countries, as agreed at the Monterrey Conference on Financing for Development.

23. Nepal welcomed the report of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization. The recommendations which it contained should be put into effect in order to promote social development in developing countries. His Government had been implementing social development programmes aimed at reducing poverty and generating employment opportunities. Its poverty reduction strategy was designed to promote economic growth, social sector development and programmes for social inclusion and good governance. It had also allocated between 35 and 40 per cent of its national budget to social sector development, as a result of which substantial social progress had been achieved in the form of longer life expectancy, lower maternal and child mortality rates, higher literacy rates and better delivery of public services.

24. Nepal attached importance to the aspirations of its young people and wished to exploit their full potential in the interest of development by providing them with gainful employment opportunities. It also believed that greater focus should be placed on proper implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth.

25. Nepal supported the work of the fourth session of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Comprehensive and Integral Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities. Furthermore, it believed that the international community should make a more generous contribution to the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing in order to promote and protect the rights of older persons.

26. **Ms. Al Haj Ali** (Syrian Arab Republic), associated her delegation with the statement made by the representative of Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and said that, despite the progress made in the attainment of the objectives set by the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly, social development in the poor countries was still hampered by numerous obstacles. The gulf between the rich and the poor countries, the adverse effects of globalization, the increase in poverty, the substantial limitations of international cooperation and the economic sanctions imposed on certain countries meant that the developing countries would have difficulty in attaining the objectives of Copenhagen and of Copenhagen +5.

27. Young people made up a high proportion of the Syrian population; while that was undoubtedly an asset, it also presented difficulties for social development. Her Government had taken numerous steps to improve the situation of young people, such as free education at all levels, improving the quality of education, combating unemployment and promoting employment for women. A national commission had been made responsible for job creation and for granting credit to young unemployed people who wished to set up a business.

28. In accordance with the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, her Government had adopted legislation, in the framework of the Arab Plan of Action on Ageing to the year 2015, for the provision of health care and social protection to elderly people.

29. Her Government was committed to the principle of the family and, in the context of preparations for the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, in cooperation with other Arab countries and with the participation of civil society organizations, had launched a televised campaign to promote awareness of the problems of families, published brochures giving indicators of the situation of families and created an independent commission responsible for family matters.

30. Her Government had incorporated the promotion of the rights of handicapped people in its socio-economic development programmes and had, in particular, guaranteed the rights of the handicapped to social protection, education and employment. Activities were carried out regularly in collaboration with civil society organizations to enable them to make their voices heard and to promote public awareness of questions relating to the protection of the rights of people with disabilities. For the period 2004-2013, the State had also put in place a programme to enhance the dignity of handicapped children. At the international level, the Syrian Arab Republic was participating actively in the deliberations of the United Nations Ad Hoc Committee for a Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

31. Her delegation welcomed the proclamation of the United Nations Literacy Decade and was engaged in integrating literacy, together with other social issues, in its national policies.

32. There were numerous difficulties hampering the attainment of the objectives of Copenhagen and Copenhagen +5 for all the developing countries, but the Syrian Arab Republic faced a particular obstacle in the region, namely the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The occupation of the Syrian Golan had deprived the country of human and material resources, and the economic, social and humanitarian situation in the occupied Arab territories was deteriorating. Peace was a precondition for social development. As it had done the previous year, Syria appealed to the international community to bring to an end as a matter of urgency to the occupation of the Arab territories in order to avoid a disaster with worldwide implications.

33. **Mr. Le Luong Minh** (Viet Nam) associated his country with the statement made by the representative of Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and recalled that 2005 would mark the tenth anniversary of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development.

34. Viet Nam warmly welcomed the consensus of the international community on the importance of social development as one of the major priorities in its overall development objectives. The development of strategies for eradicating poverty, enhancing productive employment, promoting social integration and the participation of entire populations, including the most disadvantaged groups, enhancing social protection and reducing vulnerability in the context of globalization were major achievements and had significantly improved the living conditions of the population in various countries.

35. However, there remained many obstacles to social development. The gap between rich and poor countries was getting wider; wars and ethnic and religious conflicts were preventing countries from using their resources for social development. A large part of the world's population continued to live in poverty, the HIV/AIDS pandemic continued to spread, and social evils, such as drug addiction, corruption, smuggling and organized crime, continued in many regions of the world. To overcome those difficulties, coherent economic policies must be put in place at both national and international levels. Worldwide solidarity was more important than ever and countries should cooperate to reform international institutions, accord preferential treatment in market access to developing countries, promote debt restructuring, reduction and cancellation for developing countries, and finance social development projects.

36. Viet Nam was integrating social development in the measures it took to promote economic growth. In 2003, 36.9 per cent of the budget had been devoted to social development, of which 8 per cent was for education and training and 6.3 per cent for health care.

37. Among the programmes which had enabled substantial progress to be achieved in the field of social development, mention should be made of the comprehensive strategy for economic growth and poverty eradication for the period 2001-2010, the establishment of the National Fund for Employment and the adoption of policies to provide health care for the poor.

38. Half of the Vietnamese population consisted of young people. In line with commitments under the

1995 World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, adopted by the United Nations in 1995, Viet Nam placed a high priority on youth programmes, in particular, formulating a strategy for youth development to the year 2010 and creating a National Committee on Vietnamese Youth whose mandate was to formulate policies for young people. In March 2004, the Prime Minister had approved the development programme for young people for the period 2004-2005, the focus of which was on solving urgent issues such as job counselling, employment, fighting social evils and participation in socio-economic development activities, and had declared the month of March each year as "the month of young people".

39. Viet Nam was actively implementing the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. Programmes for the care of elderly people were being integrated into socio-economic development programmes. The Viet Nam Association of Elderly Persons, established in 1995, had branches in all cities and provinces. The ordinance on elderly persons had been approved in 2000. The National Committee for Elderly People had been established in August 2004, and a national plan of action for the elderly for the period 2005-2010 was being worked out.

40. **Mr. Ndimeni** (South Africa), after associating himself with the statement made by the representative of Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that his Government, which had presided over the Commission for Social Development since February 2004, was conscious of the need to elaborate strategies to eradicate poverty, achieve full and productive employment, enhance social integration and eradicate social exclusion, marginalization and underdevelopment. Those strategies formed the cornerstone of the commitments made at the World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen, and the forty-third session of the Commission should contribute concretely to the preparations for the meeting on the follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit in September 2005.

41. South Africa expected that the 10-year review of the World Summit for Social Development would produce an outcome document that would inform the international community on the best strategies and measures to ensure that globalization benefited all. The report of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization, entitled "A Fair Globalization: Creating Opportunities for All", was therefore timely and allowed for meaningful debate, the purpose of which was to seek a common understanding on eliminating the differences between the countries that the Commission was prepared to assist.

42. South Africa was a part of Africa, to which Commitment 7 of the Copenhagen Declaration was devoted. In 2003 and 2004, the Group of 77 and China had introduced important resolutions on the implementation of the objectives of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) to make sure that NEPAD became part of the 10-year review and that cooperation with the international community, the private sector and society guaranteed a better life for all.

43. His Government strongly believed that it was necessary to elaborate, as a complement to international human rights law, a comprehensive and integral international convention to promote and protect the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities, in order to fill the existing gaps in that law that had resulted from neglect, discrimination, marginalization and social exclusion of persons with disabilities. The convention should: (a) reaffirm the legal obligations under human rights treaty law as covering all human beings, including persons with disabilities; (b) emphasize that non-discrimination derived from the right to equal protection under the law; and (c) focus on the need to create in all areas an environment adapted to the specific needs of persons with disabilities.

44. It was also important to mark the International Year of the Family and the International Year of Older Persons. South Africa had proclaimed October the Social Development Month. During the current year, it would also commemorate its 10 years of freedom and the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family. All of humanity considered the family as a basic element of society. In South Africa, the family was not only an agent for political, economic, cultural and social change but also a vehicle for the care, protection and development of its members. The Plan of Action on the Family in Africa, adopted in Cotonou, Benin, in 2004, was a significant initiative, because it pertained to several issues such as poverty reduction, the right to social services, promotion of the environment, sustainable development, strengthening of family relationships, peace and security, follow up,

monitoring and evaluation, and would be the basis for developing South Africa's family policy.

45. Concerning the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, in the previous 10 years South Africa had made progress in the area of education and skills development for young people, two priorities of his Government. By the end of 2004, at least 5,000 young people out of school, without employment or training, would be serving in health, social development, conservation, environmental protection and infrastructure development programmes, which should ensure their long-term integration and participation in society.

46. *Ms. Kusorgbor (Ghana), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

47. **Mr. Nsemi** (Congo), speaking under agenda item 93, associated himself with the statement made by the representative of Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. In 1995, at the World Summit for Social Development, the international community had been committed to putting people at the centre of national and international development policies. The international community had reaffirmed that commitment in the new measures to accelerate social development adopted at the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly in 2000, but it was far from attaining the goals that it had set in the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action.

48. The Congo was a victim of globalization, which had changed the parameters of social development in all countries. In order to solve the problems caused by the debt burden (increase in poverty, widespread unemployment that affected mainly young persons, and other social scourges such as the phenomenon of street children, child trafficking and prostitution), the President of the Republic of the Congo had established a programme entitled "Fresh Hope". He had also, in cooperation with the international financial institutions, elaborated a programme for the 2004-2009 period consistent with the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper.

49. Acutely aware of the question of youth employment, his Government had, in particular, launched a 10-year farming and fisheries programme (2004-2013) to create sustainable employment, improve the living standards of farmers, reduce dependence on food handouts and re-establish macroeconomic equilibria.

50. A national demobilization and reintegration programme was being carried out with the support of the Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Programme, the World Bank and the European Union.

51. Lastly, to combat HIV/AIDS, one of the leading causes of morbidity and mortality in the Congo, his Government had established a national strategy to combat the pandemic for the 2003-2007 period that relied on decentralization and a multisectoral approach, and had established a National Council to Combat HIV/AIDS under the personal authority of the Head of State.

52. Like other developing and least developed countries, which were susceptible to serious financial crises, insecurity, poverty, exclusion, inequality with respect to growth and income distribution and problems related to education and health, the Congo would not be able to meet the challenge of social development on its own. It required the assistance of the international community and welcomed in particular the work of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization, which was seeking to encourage dialogue between various countries in order to promote a more democratic and more equitable world order. His Government also looked forward to the forty-third session of the Commission for Social Development and the events that would be organized during the tenth anniversary of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, which would allow for progress towards meeting the commitments that the international community had made in 1995.

53. **Mr. Ivanou** (Belarus) said that while the efforts to implement the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action as well as the decisions of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly had been insufficient, they had nonetheless led national and international policy makers to place greater stress on social development. Belarus was satisfied with the detailed analysis put forward in the report of the Secretary-General on implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (A/59/120).

54. The transition to multi-year planning had enabled the Commission for Social Development to focus on current problems, although many of its documents still lacked practical recommendations and decisions. The

Commission must encourage enhanced partnership between developed countries, developing countries and countries in transition in order to contribute to the attainment of the social development goals agreed upon at the international level. The Economic and Social Council must not merely "take note" of the decisions of the Commission; it must give them increased attention, particularly during the high-level segment.

55. Concerned to give the market economy a social dimension, his Government had adopted a policy of economic stabilization and increasing wages, pensions and benefits. Therefore, the number of persons living below the poverty line had decreased; thanks to his Government's efforts to combat poverty, less than 2 per cent of the population lived in absolute poverty, and the unemployment rate was only 2 per cent. His Government devoted 14 per cent of its GDP to public assistance to vulnerable families, older persons and persons with disabilities and to the development of infrastructure and social services. It was also implementing its third programme to mitigate the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster, which had affected one in five inhabitants in Belarus.

56. The celebration of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family had refocused the international community's attention on the family and its problems. The Belarusian delegation believed that there was a need to strengthen the role played by the United Nations in that area. For its part, Belarus based its policy on the equal sharing of family obligations between men and women, paramount concern for the interests of the child, and partnership between the family and the State, and it was endeavouring to protect families from poverty by granting targeted assistance and various benefits.

57. Belarus commended the work of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities at its third and fourth sessions. The greatest possible flexibility must be applied to that process to avoid differences that would slow down the elaboration of that instrument. To assist its 480,000 persons with disabilities, Belarus had adopted various programmes essentially to eliminate the obstacles that prevented their integration into society. It was endeavouring to find them a place in the world of work by offering benefits to their employers. His Government planned to establish centres enabling persons with disabilities to receive training and a job.

58. The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing provided a clear response to population change. The Commission for Social Development had a particular role to play because it must coordinate the follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing. Belarus hoped that the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat would broaden its activities by offering assistance to Member States to help them achieve the Madrid International Plan of Action. Older persons were one of Belarus's priorities. Therefore, his Government envisaged a combined public and private pension system.

59. **Ms. Radhi** (Bahrain), speaking under agenda item 94, said that her delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. People were both the target of and a vehicle for development. The Bahraini Constitution recognized the gamut of political, civil, economic, social and cultural rights, as well as the importance of the family, and national bodies had been asked to draw up laws to safeguard the rights of all family members. In fact, her country was a party to all the international conventions that safeguarded the rights of young people, older persons and persons with disabilities, in particular the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and it would soon accede to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Strategies still needed to be drawn up to ensure that all groups in society participated more fully in the development process.

60. Young people played a crucial role in ensuring prosperity, progress and sustainable development. Her country had expanded democratic freedoms since the accession of the new king, enabling young people to become more actively involved in political life and civil society. A consultative committee had drawn up a plan for a Youth Parliament which should become operational between October 2004 and March 2006 and, with the support of the British Council and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), measures had been taken to raise awareness among the population. A strategy had also been finalized to identify the needs of young people and gather information on education, sport, leisure, culture,

participation and fundamental rights, health, the environment and social action.

61. According to the *Human Development Report 2004*, her country ranked in first place among Arab countries and 40th place among the 177 countries covered in the report. Her Government also had just drawn up a three-year strategy (2006-2009), to combat unemployment, a problem which affected a considerable number of young people.

62. **Mr. Butler** (Bahamas), speaking under agenda item 94, explained that his country was a trans-shipment point for illegal narcotics, bringing adverse effects, particularly violent crime, which cut short the potential and lives of young people. The fact that such activities were, moreover, associated with the illicit arms trade threatened his country's social and economic development and challenged young people's prospects of leading productive lives, as many believed that such activities were an easy alternative to hard work. One tool in the fight against illegal drugs was education. His Government was making every effort to give young people a quality education to enable them to take their rightful place in society.

63. HIV/AIDS, which posed a grave threat to human, social and economic development in his country, had had a major impact on young people. His Government had made strides in tackling the pandemic, particularly with respect to mother-to-child transmission. However, young people must also commit themselves to healthy lifestyles and thereby play their part in the fight to eradicate the disease.

64. Lastly, it was important for young people to be involved in planning and decision-making regarding issues that would affect their future, such as terrorism, poverty, armed conflict and HIV/AIDS.

65. **Mrs. Laohaphan** (Thailand), speaking under agenda items 93 and 94, said that her delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Her country had achieved almost all of its targets under the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and was now setting an MDG Plus target to bring the proportion of poor people in her country to below 4 per cent by 2009.

66. Her country's strategies had focused on partnership with concerned actors at all levels of society with the aim of eradicating poverty, reducing income disparities, creating employment and improving social protection and integration, in particular for the most vulnerable groups, thereby achieving a people-centred approach to development and empowering individuals. However, that very much depended on a stable and favourable international environment. Her country's efforts to contribute to the global development agenda were guided by the principle of self-help and partnership.

67. At the international level, there was an urgent need to better manage globalization and redress imbalances and inequities in order to provide assistance — primarily financial — to already marginalized countries that had been further weakened by internal conflicts, transnational problems, HIV/AIDS and/or natural disasters, and to help them achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

68. Young people were the key to development; her country was therefore implementing a 10-year Plan of Action on Youth (2002-2011).

69. With respect to older persons, an Act had been adopted in 2003 to guarantee their protection and welfare, a second National Plan on Older Persons was being implemented and the National Committee on Older Persons reported to the Government and made recommendations. Lastly, 13 April had been declared National Older Persons Day. However, account needed to be taken of the ageing of the population and its potential implications for development.

70. On the issue of persons with disabilities, a five-year national plan (2001-2006) had been implemented to improve their quality of life and, in cooperation with the Government of Japan, the Asia-Pacific Development Centre on Disability had been established to help develop their potential. Lastly, her Government had participated in drawing up an international convention on the protection of the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities.

71. **Mrs. Romulus** (Haiti), speaking under agenda item 94, endorsed the statement made by the representative of Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The current socio-political crisis in her country — which had, in addition, been badly hit by flooding in the summer of 2004, costing the lives of around 3,000 people — had serious consequences for economic and social development. The interim Government had adopted a development strategy which took account of the interdependence between the

protection of human rights and democratization and was based on recovery and reconstruction policies. The interim cooperation framework also comprised a social development programme which aimed to improve housing, the economic integration of young people and the protection of women's rights, and to reduce unemployment. Considerable resources were required to reduce poverty, improve social integration and create productive employment. The latter was essential given that employment was a factor of equality and personal development.

72. Gender equality was also crucial because it helped to prevent crises. Women played a central role in Haitian society by ensuring the stability and education of new generations. The rights and needs of older persons and persons with disabilities were now better recognized and taken more into account. Lastly, literacy was essential if people were to exercise their civil and political freedoms and their economic, social and cultural rights.

73. **Mrs. Thandar** (Myanmar) said that her delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Her country, which had just been elected a member of the Commission for Social Development, was committed to achieving the goals of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development. Social development and economic development should be intertwined; unfortunately that was not the case. In her country, the National Committee on Social Development placed great emphasis on alleviating poverty, creating productive employment and improving social integration. To that end, it organized seminars, conferences, workshops and training programmes, while its seven subcommittees were responsible for education, health, youth, disaster relief, HIV/AIDS, women's affairs and labour. Her Government's people-centred strategy aimed to alleviate and eventually eradicate poverty, particularly in the less developed border areas, where considerable sums had been invested in infrastructure development. Furthermore, in 2003, Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Thailand and Myanmar had adopted the Bagan Declaration with a view to generating growth, increasing employment and reducing disparities in their border areas.

74. With regard to literacy, a 30-year National Education Development Plan aimed to achieve universal primary education through formal, non-formal and informal education. Her Government was also implementing a four-year Special Education Plan. A campaign to ensure that all children of school age enrolled in primary school had resulted in an enrolment rate of 95.05 per cent in 2004. In the past decade, the number of colleges and universities had increased from 32 to 154, while enrolment had risen from 120,000 to 890,000. The international community must support those countries with particular needs by providing the financial and technical assistance required to improve their literacy policies and programmes, and thereby help them to achieve the goals of the United Nations Literacy Decade.

75. **Ms. Bucknell** (Fiji), speaking under agenda item 94, thanked her Government for supporting youth policies and programmes and for having for the first time invited a youth representative to address the Third Committee. Since young people would eventually be holding posts of responsibility, their elders had to prepare them to inherit their roles. Policies and programmes must therefore be targeted to young adults and be responsive to their needs. Accordingly, her Government intended to adopt a national youth policy designed and driven primarily by young people and key stakeholders, aimed at providing an operational framework with achievable objectives. The success of any programme or framework also required monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in which, again, young people were involved.

76. It was important to acknowledge the great role that families played in nation-building, for parents were the first role models for young people.

77. Youth activism should aim to mobilize needed support for the elders in their communities, but should also be directed at ensuring that initiatives and programmes for young people enjoyed some degree of continuity.

78. One of the greatest difficulties experienced by the young people of developing nations like Fiji was in entering the labour market. While a youth employment policy had been adopted by her Government, there must also be the assurance that the policy instruments and programmes would be adequately funded.

79. **Mr. Koubaa** (Tunisia), after associating his delegation with the statement made by Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that his Government, taking the same position as the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization,

advocated globalization with a social or human face that met the aspirations and daily needs of individuals, communities and peoples. Rather than being a cause of dissension, globalization would then become a means to a more secure and just world, one less marked by exclusion, where prosperity would be better distributed. Tunisia's position on the matter of human development was based on the indissociability of the economic and social dimensions, and on solidarity, mutual assistance and national consensus; that was why it had proposed the establishment of a global solidarity fund that would embody the principle of shared responsibility

80. Tunisia was particularly interested in the implementation and monitoring of programmes for the disabled and was convinced that civil society and the non-governmental organizations in particular should be urged to take part in national and international efforts to encourage full participation by the disabled in social life and development.

81. **Mr. Belinga-Eboutou** (Cameroon) said that he would say only a few words to the Bureau and the Committee since he was speaking at the end of the general debate.

82. Cameroon, having held the Committee's chairmanship in 2003, had been able to appreciate the skill with which the Bureau worked within the rules of procedure of the General Assembly and had no doubt that it would build on what had been done. He assured it of his full cooperation.

83. He reminded the Committee that the peoples of the United Nations had proclaimed a little less than 60 years earlier their faith in basic human rights, the dignity and worth of the human person and the equal rights of men and women, and had declared their resolve to foster social progress and establish better living conditions and greater freedom for all peoples. The reminder was a way of underscoring the importance of the Third Committee as an essential link in the work being done by the United Nations to save future generations from the scourge of war. Among the Main Committees of the General Assembly, which generally focused on States and statistics, the Third Committee was one of the only ones whose thinking and decisions were centred on the human being, the individual human being whose rights must be guaranteed in order to avoid situations ending in conflict. Human rights were often seen as restricted solely to political rights, and yet the human being, as a single individual, could only have rights that were likewise indissociable. The tendency to reduce everything to political rights was responsible for the fact that human rights were often seen as means to an end, and that was also why the Committee, which sought better living conditions for all and should therefore work in harmony and by consensus, did not always manage to do so. Consequently, people, instead of uniting, and human rights, instead of being a force for unity, were divisive.

84. The Committee also needed to give more thought to how realistically to promote progress without the expectation that all should necessarily live alike, because although human beings were one with regard to their rights, they were diverse with regard to the conditions in which they developed. The constants were, nonetheless, that each person had the right to shelter, education and medical care. The Committee should therefore do everything possible to remain faithful to the spirit that presided over the establishment of the Organization and to the commitments that were clearly renewed in the Millennium Declaration. Cameroon, therefore, called on the Committee to place the individual human being at the heart of its deliberations.

85. **Mr. Husain** (Observer for the Organization of the Islamic Conference), referring to agenda item 94 (a), expressed his organization's fullest support for the initiatives by Governments and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations relating to the observance of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, and commended the Secretariat for the documentation provided, particularly the reports in documents A/59/176 and E/CN.5/2004/3. The Organization of the Islamic Conference also lauded the work done in that field by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, especially its United Nations Programme on the Family, with which his organization had had a fruitful working relationship for several years, even though it had not always agreed with its definition of the family. The statements of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan on that point echoed the collective concern of the member States of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, which they hoped the Committee would take into account in its current and future work. His organization believed that the natural family was the basic unit of society and should be strengthened. Qatar, as Chairman of the

Group of 77, had rightly emphasized the pressing need to preserve the family while preparing it for involvement in a rapidly changing society. Several other delegations, among them States which were members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, had advocated using the observance of the tenth anniversary as an opportunity to develop measures for reinforcing national and international institutions; the United States had drawn attention to the links between literacy and education, ageing and the family. In its statement to the Committee at the 2003 session, the Organization of the Islamic Conference had advocated the issuance of a declaration or a proclamation by heads of State and the establishment of national coordination mechanisms to harmonize policies and develop programmes in support of the family and to assist in mainstreaming family concerns in all national development efforts. It was therefore gratified to note that the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General (A/59/176, paras. 20 to 26) were along similar lines. It was convinced that the Secretariat had a crucial role to play in the mainstreaming efforts, which would require the strengthening of the United Nations Programme on the Family in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, whose coordinating role would be pivotal. The appointment of a new focal point on the family in the Division for Social Policy and Development was to be welcomed, and his organization looked forward to working as fruitfully with him as with his predecessor.

Statements in exercise of the right of reply

86. **Mr. Israeli** (Israel) said that the Syrian delegation had once again made hostile, aggressive and unfounded statements that were out of place in a forum such as the United Nations. It was regrettable that the Syrian Arab Republic had decided to criticize Israel in all international meetings, thus casting doubt on its call for peace. In actual fact, criticizing Israel and working for the adoption of resolutions lacking any objectivity that were directed against his country did not do anything to promote peace in the region.

87. **Ms. Al Haj Ali** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that in the eyes of international law, Israel was occupying a territory which was not its own, and that had dramatic consequences on the population of the occupied territory and represented a violation of its fundamental rights. Anyone seeking peace must act in a way that proved it; yet what was being witnessed, heard on television or read in United Nations documents refuted Israel's contentions. What would lead to peace would be the cessation of the occupation, the cessation of the sufferings of the population bent under the yoke of the occupation.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.